

CD 2003--115



Thursday, October 30, 2003
Walter Hall, 12:10 pm

Thursdays at Noon
presents

MUSIC AND POETRY

Excerpts from **War and Peace**, opera in thirteen scenes by Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953) based on the novel by Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910).

Andrei	Matthew Leigh, baritone
Natasha	Eve-Rachel McLeod, soprano
Sonya	Michèle Bogdanowicz, mezzo
Pierre	Stephen Erickson, tenor
Denisov and Kutuzov	Giles Tomkins, bass-baritone

John Hawkins, piano
Penelope Cookson, stage direction
Sterling Beckwith, Russian language coach

Tracks

1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15

Prof. Ralph Lindheim, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, will
comment on the excerpts to be performed on today's programme.

- 2 Scene 1: Andrei
- 4 Scene 1: Natasha, Sonya
- 6 Scene 3: Natasha
- 8 Scene 6: Pierre
- 10 Scene 7: Pierre, Denisov
- 12 Scene 10: Kutuzov
- 14 Scene 12: Andrei, Natasha
- 16 Scene 13: Final Chorus, arranged for vocal quintet

Biographies

Michèle Bogdanowicz is a graduate of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, and holds a B.Mus. (performance) as well as a Diploma in Operatic Performance.

Stephen Erickson, Matthew Leigh, Eve-Rachel McLeod and Giles Tomkins are students in the Faculty of Music's Opera Diploma programme.

The founding head of Music at York University where he has taught for many years, **Sterling Beckwith** is active as a bass soloist in both concert and opera. As a coach and conductor he works with some of Canada's leading singers. Dr. Beckwith is an Associate Member of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies.

Penelope Cookson is in her second year of study as a stage director in the Opera Division. She is assisting with the forthcoming production of Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte*.

Composer and pianist **John Hawkins** is a professor in the Theory and Composition Division of the Faculty of Music. He organizes and performs in the Music and Poetry lecture/concert series, now in its ninth season, which features vocal music of the last hundred years.

Prof. Ralph Lindheim has recently retired from the University of Toronto's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, where, for over thirty years, he has taught courses in Russian drama and Russian fiction of the nineteenth century. He is currently engaged in projects devoted to the life and works of his favourite author, Anton Chekhov.

SCENES FROM SERGEI PROKOFIEV'S
"WAR AND PEACE"

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Scene One

The house and garden on the Rostov family estate on a moonlit night in May 1809. Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, who has come to see Count Rostov on some business matters, sits reading by the window. Then he blows out the candle and opens the window.

PRINCE ANDREI

This radiant spring sky... can it be an illusion? Are there such things as sunlight, spring, and happiness? Today as I rode through the forest, everything was suddenly fresh and green. The birches and alders had sprouted new leaves. The green grass was bright with the first flowers of spring. But beside the forest path there stood a huge oak tree covered in old knots and scars, and with gnarled branches and twigs. Like an angry and contemptuous giant among the curling leafy birches and seemed to say: "Springtime, and love, and happiness are all a stupid, meaningless deception. There is no such thing as springtime, sunshine, or happiness."

NATASHA

Little stream meandering over the bright sand, how delightful is your quiet music! How you sparkle as you flow towards the river! Come to me, o gracious muse!

SONYA

In a garland of rosebuds and with a golden flute, lean over the foaming waters and dream.

NATASHA

And rousing the sounds, sing of misty evening in the lap of slumbering Nature.

NATASHA and SONYA

How wonderful the sunset beyond the hill, when the fields are in shadow and groves seem so remote; when herds run down to the river from the golden hills; and the echo rumbles louder over the waters. And stowing his nets, the fisherman in his little boat steers along the bank among the thickets.

NATASHA

O Lord, o God! What a shame to sleep! But let's go to bed, if sleep we must!

Scene Three

NATASHA

What right have they to decide they don't want to accept me into their family? O God, if only he were here! Perhaps he'll come today. Maybe he even arrived yesterday, but I have just forgotten, and he's sitting there in the drawing room. I shall simply embrace him without any shyness. I shall make look into my eyes with that searching, questioning gaze of his. I'll return home and ill suddenly see him, his eyes, his face, and his smile. Oh, why do I feel so lost? I need him now. Right now, this moment! Give him to me! I cannot wait! I'm afraid something's bound to happen. What can be done to bring him back home quickly? I'm afraid for him, for myself, and for everything.

Scene Six

PIERRE

I sought to avoid her. I believed my feelings for her were stronger than those that a married man ought to feel for the intended wife of his friend. She's betrothed to my friend... betrothed to Prince Andrei, who loves her so passionately. And this Natasha Rostova, once so sweet, has rejected Andrei Bolkonsky for that fool Anatole, and is so besotted with him that she's agreed to run away with him. And what about Prince Andrei? What about the pride of the Bolkonsky family? Am I really not the only man to suffer the wretched fate of being tied to a vacuous and horrid woman?

Scene Seven

PIERRE

What a despicable and heartless breed! If only I could go away somewhere, get out of this house, and abandon all this useless luxury. If it has any value, it lies in the sheer pleasure of being able to renounce it! Oh, how can I find inner peace and harmony? I've sought it by helping and caring for others, I've sought in the freemasons' brotherhood and their teaching of equality and love, I've sought it in the distractions of society life, and in romantic love – love for Natasha Rostova. Natasha Rostova! She doesn't hold the answer to any of the questions that torment me so. But I have only to think of her, and I find myself immediately transported to a world that is bright with beauty and love...

DENISOV (*running in*)

Count! Pyotr Kirillovich! A messenger has arrived from Vilna. Napoleon has moved his troops up to our frontier.

PIERRE

Does this mean war?

DENISOV

It does look like that.

Scene Ten

KUTUZOV

When, oh when was this dreadful business decided? Moscow, mother of all Russian cities, you lie spread before us and look majestic in the sunlight. Yet is that sad and troubled hour approaching when our Russian army has to retreat from your sacred walls without a fight? A perfidious enemy has dared to invade our land, and soon he will come to grief. Love of our country, and our soldiers' courage and our prayers will bring us victory. Russia is not in the habit of subordination; her people will fight to defend their freedom. We shall restore peace to our native land, and bring peace to other nations. Inside the white walls of Mother Moscow, our foes will never be able to subdue the hearts of our valiant, free people. Our entire Russian land will be strewn with the enemy's bones. Our great people shall defeat their foes.

Scene Twelve

PRINCE ANDREI

Can it be that fate has so strangely brought us together today, only for me to die now? I thought that the truth of life had been revealed to me, the beginning of an eternal love that needs no object. Not that love which loves in return for something, for some reason. To love everything and everyone means to love no one, not to live this earthly life. But now what am I to do, when I love you? I love you more than anything in the world. Love, and love for you alone has invaded my heart again and is tying me to this life; it has stolen into my heart again and is calling on me to live again.

NATASHA

From that day at Otradnoye when I first saw you, I have loved you. Nothing, nothing like this every happened to me before. You have come to mean everything to me. Oh, why did you go away just then? Now I shall never leave you. What strange,

unexpected happiness! All this is destiny. Fate has led us to this: in the garden at Otradnoye, on that spring night, love stole into my heart. With you I have found pure happiness again.

CHORUS

Piti, piti, piti, piti...

PRINCE ANDREI (*delirious*)

But why is everything stretching further and further, rising higher and higher... And this pain...

NATASHA

Pain... Why pain?

PRINCE ANDREI

And piti, piti, piti, boom! Piti, piti, piti, boom!

CHORUS

Piti, piti, piti, piti...

PRINCE ANDREI

Enough, please stop... Please...

CHORUS

Piti, piti, piti, piti.....

Scene Thirteen

CHORUS

We went to fight to the death for our country. The people came forward to fight to the death. We have defended Russia with our blood. We have defended our mighty land. Our Field Marshal led us onward, led us into a just battle for our native country. We have triumphed, and the enemy has been ground to dust. We have fought hard for our happiness. The glory of our Russia shall not fade down the ages. Our father and Field Marshal led the people, and right was on our side. The people have defended Russia, their great land. The Field Marshal led us forward. We have smashed the enemy to dust. Glory to our country! Glory to our sacred land! Glory to our Russian army! Glory to Field Marshal Kutuzov! Hurrah!